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**Testimony on Raised H.B. No. 6600**  
**An Act Concerning The Establishment Of The Sustinet Plan**  
**Public Health, Human Services, Insurance and Real Estate Committees**  
**March 2, 2009**  
**Submitted by: Mary Jane Lundgren, RN, MSW**

**Members of the Public Health, Human Services, Insurance and Real Estate Committees:**

I am here today on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter. We believe that it is morally and fiscally imperative that every resident of Connecticut should have equal, comprehensive and affordable access to health care. With the current national, state and world economic crisis, the numbers of uninsured (currently 50 Million) will be exploding. Along with the current cost of health care, Connecticut employers, private payers, and the State are approaching the crisis stage. While the United States spends far more per person on health care than any other country (75% more than Canada or France), we have the distinction of higher infant mortality and substantially lower life expectancy. The current health care system is on the brink of disaster. The State of Connecticut can no longer deny or delay the need for a more comprehensive, universal health plan for all residents. Piecemeal reform will be more expensive and will not provide adequate coverage for all residents. Toward that end, we strongly urge you to support the establishment of the Sustinet Plan.

The Sustinet Plan is comprehensive, inclusive, sustainable and economical. We have known for far too long that our current system is financially burdensome. Yet, we have continued to allow health care costs to spiral out of control. This results in many Connecticut residents being either uninsured or underinsured. By leveraging the purchasing power of the state, Sustinet is designed to reduce costs and improve health care. Employers will pay more affordable premiums for their employees. Households will have lower

personal health care costs. Fewer uninsured and higher payment rates to providers will reduce the cost shift to private insurers.

Using Connecticut taxpayers dollars, Sustinet merges state employees and retirees with HUSKY and SAGA participants into a self-insured pool. Self employed individuals, municipalities, sole proprietors, small businesses, and non-profits are allowed to join.

Under this plan, all Connecticut residents will have access to their choice of high quality health coverage and health care. No resident will be denied care because of pre-existing conditions. Mental health, dental care coverage and medical home services are included. Most importantly, premiums and co-pays are subsidized based on income. Many Connecticut lower income residents on HUSKY have been denied care by providers due to lower reimbursements. Under Sustinet, these providers will receive a fair compensation for the care they provide. The elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in health care will be a moral and economic bonus for Connecticut. Focusing on illness and disease prevention, a healthy population will enhance job productivity and creativity. Our students will be able to maximize their educational experience and enable Connecticut to compete in the global economy.

Connecticut has a unique opportunity to be a leader in the United States. Our leadership on this issue will resonate across the country. The current health care system is in grave danger of collapsing. The burgeoning numbers of uninsured will overwhelm the system. Sustinet gives us the solution to the health care crisis that faces Connecticut and the Nation. Universal Health Care time has come and the Connecticut Chapter of NASW will not rest until the Legislature approves this plan. There is no turning back on this issue. We need to join the ranks of all the other industrialized nations in the world and provide universal health care for all our residents!

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